

February 14, 2016 To: Gymnastics Canada Awards Committee

The members of Rhythmic Waves Gymnastics Club, from St. Catharines, Ontario are writing this letter to support the nomination of Marta Selmeczi.

Marta Selmeczi is being nominated for the Life Membership award by Kerstin Wadsten. We are members of Marta's Ladies Masters AGG group.

The Rhythmic Waves, under Marta's direction, have participated as a part of Team Canada in three world Gymnaestradas. Past champions who participated in individual gymnastics nationally and internationally have found a place in our group. Recreational and school program gymnasts have found a place in our group. Marta has given all of us the opportunity to participate in gymnastics throughout our entire lives. We have active gymnasts in our group who have been coached by Marta for over 50 years. Please see attached quotes from past and current club members.

Marta coaches the Rhythmic Waves team 3 times per week. We are currently preparing for a competition in April and for the next World Gymnaestrada in 2019. We think it is remarkable and inspirational that, at the age of 81, Marta continues to use her skills and talents to select music, develop floor patterns, choreograph routines, and conduct practices. Her dedication is the key to our group's longevity and success. In addition, there are two weekly children's programs run by Marta, which ensure that there will be gymnasts to join our Ladies Group one day in the future.

Marta has a strength of character, a courage to start new things, a creative genius, and a warmth in her heart that is unlike anyone else in our lives. Marta has been so much more to us than the person who teaches us body waves, split leaps, and pirouettes. She has been a role model and has encouraged the champion in all of us. As we go through the different stages of life, gymnastics has been a constant for us, and it is Marta's passion that keeps us coming back.

It is with profound gratitude to Marta and the highest recommendation

to Gymnastics Canada that we support this nomination for the Life Membership award. This award would be a most deserving tribute to her contribution to the sport of gymnastics in Canada.

### **The Rhythmic Waves Ladies Masters**

Charlene Cratt Becky Bridges Ildiko Szolosi Linda Cranford Debbie Shugan-Krahn Donna Twose

Irmi Jahn Bev Janzen Hilary Bezuyen Madelyn Law Caitlin Bryan

### **Quotes from club members**

“If you speak with anyone in the city of St.Catharines, the name “Marta” is synonymous with gymnastics. Anyone you encounter knows someone who has kids, grandkids, or was even trained by Marta themselves. Whether that was at Lincoln gymnastics club, in the children’s school programs, or in the many gymnaestradas that the club held. Marta has touched so many lives, from the small children in the school program that she still runs today, to the women in her ladies group. Those little children (“my babies” as Marta would say) leave their weekly class with chocolates from Marta in hand. As for the ladies, many are former gymnasts who Marta has relentlessly pursued and pulled out of retirement to form her ladies group that travels the world attending Gymnaestradas. This goes in hand with her belief of gymnastics for all ages and keeping people involved.” -**Loiuse Librock, President of Rhythmic Waves**

“Marta draws on her experience to get the most out of everyone, and through her passion and tough love approach, helps them achieve their goals. She has worked with elite level athletes while still engaging in introductory gymnastics programs with the belief that gymnastics should be accessible for all. She has a soft spot for small children and has impacted numerous lives, encouraging them and influencing lifelong participation in sport.

In the Niagara region, many people can remember going to gymnastics as children or maybe taking their own children to classes. Discussion of my own experience often reveals that Marta is behind their involvement as well and continues to demonstrate her influence on

lives throughout the area. Within the world of gymnastics in Ontario, she has influenced and inspired numerous programs and even after decades people may no longer remember her name, but they can describe her perfectly and give her credit for building and promoting gymnastics in Ontario. I can remember attending an event as a representative of Burlington Gymnastics Club and engaging in conversation with a gentleman whose daughter had been a rhythmic gymnast in Burlington. He began to describe how the program came to exist. As he spoke, he began to describe a European woman who lived in Niagara who was instrumental in helping them get a proper carpet for the girls and finding a suitable coach. He couldn't remember her name, but he remembered her personality. The woman he described was Marta and I found it ironic that the coach I'd worked with both as an athlete and a coach was also, in a way, responsible for my position in the rhythmic program at Burlington Gymnastics Club as well.

She has also influenced me as a coach. Through her, I developed a greater appreciation for rhythmic gymnastics and have drawn on my experiences with her to create well rounded athletes. Secondly, having the opportunity to nurture a love of sport in general is a source of great satisfaction for myself and promotes healthy habits for those who I have the chance to work with. I hope to be as memorable to those I work with as she is to numerous others.

I came to know Marta towards the end of my gymnastics career. She allowed me the opportunity to continue to develop as an athlete while at the same time introducing me to friendships that will last a life time. Those experiences have helped shape who I am today and provided me with an amazing support system that time and proximity cannot diminish. Marta is inspirational in so many ways and deserves to be recognized for all she has done throughout her career.”-**Jenn Siren, AGG gymnast, 2000-2005**

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“Marta was very passionate about the sport and an inspiration for gymnasts everywhere.

Anyone who has had Marta as a coach will be familiar with the line: "girls, have a vitamin c"

## **-Cyndal Janzen, Rhythmic and AGG gymnast**

"Marta has tirelessly devoted her life to gymnastics. As one of her gymnasts from age 11 through to 40 years old I have seen Marta move through many stages of her career from high performance national level coach to an inspirational coach for a ladies group. She not only coached me through my gymnastics career, but she also provided me with much guidance in my life. As a coach Marta instilled in me qualities of hard work, dedication, and perseverance of which helped me achieve national and international levels in gymnastics. All of these skills were essential in gymnastics, and were also transferred in my professional career. Marta has always been a tough coach but one who is caring and took the time to truly understand her gymnasts and what they needed to achieve high levels of performance while balancing all other aspects of life." **-Madelyn Law (nee Beamer), Rhythmic gymnast, and member of Ladies masters group**

"I don't think I ever would have made it had it not been for Marta taking me under her wing without charging for several years as my mom likely could not have afforded it. Marta had the biggest heart for all of her gymnasts, she coached from the heart as well as from her brilliant and gifted genius in the realm of gymnastics/dance." **-Donna Twose (nee Kadwell), Rhythmic Gymnast, and member of Ladies masters group.**

"Marta has dedicated her life to her love and passion for the sport of gymnastics. In her quest to educate, promote and teach gymnastics, she has touched and enhanced so many lives. Her enthusiasm echoes in our gymnasiums today as many of her former gymnasts and colleagues still continue to teach her methods and techniques abroad. Those who have worked with Marta and have trained with her understand her level of commitment to this sport, and we are grateful for the experience to have witnessed and worked with such an inspiration." **-Jennifer Moscato, Rhythmic Gymnast**

"Marta is so deserving of a Lifetime membership award. What a woman she is! I can think of a million of her famous lines! More important than those lines though is the actual legacy that they have created.

Whether you were her gymnast in 1975 or 2005, the bold, sometimes sticky sweet honesty is what people remember and LOVE about Marta. She remembers EVERYONE, pays compliments when they're due, and criticizes when it's necessary. And even if at times it isn't welcomed, we love and appreciate her all the same." -**Amanda Nemeth, AGG gymnast**

"Too many words / expressions come to mind when one hears the name Marta Selmeczi. The most important ones are those that guide me each and every day of my life. To be honest, passionate and committed to educating. Without Marta there would be no gymnastics in the Niagara region. Without Marta's legacy there is no history of our sport in this region. I have devoted my life's work to inspire our youth because I grew up under the

leadership of exceptionally compassionate and dedicated women like Marta pushing me not to just want to be great but exceptional in everything I did. It is not easy to summarize a woman of her magnitude but if I had to it would be....'do not just live life Feel Life in everything you do'

Marta and Toni my artistic coach have single handedly given me the gift of love and life as if refers to teaching and empowering others. Their methods were completely different but their message in my mind was the same... I was supposed to stand tall and be my own person no matter what. I should not just live my life, I needed to feel my love for life in each movement I took. You asking me to think of a quote for Marta made me realize how much I loved these two women always wanted nothing but the best from and for me.... not sure the women in my life know how they have helped me."

**-Adriana Forde, Rhythmic and AGG gymnast**

"Marta was always a coach that pushed her gymnasts that little bit more. Some of her gymnasts were part of the Olympic hopeful camps in 1972 and 1976. She was always more than eager to send her gymnasts to any clinics, competitions, and demonstrations to improve

their skills. She is an amazing coach, choreographer, and a loving person who treats every one of her gymnasts like family. It has been my pleasure to have spent most of my life with her. **-Debbie Shugan-Krahn, artistic gymnast and member of Ladies Masters Group**

“Marta Selmeczi is nothing short of a sports pioneer in Canada. Her relentless determination to bring the European sport of gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics to Canada resulted in the establishment of a nucleus of competitors who achieved international recognition and experience. Many ‘firsts’ were credited to Marta and her forward-thinking coaching. Her innovative thinking and creative approach resulted in some incredible accomplishments: bringing European gymnastics stars to perform and coach in Canada; establishing cutting-edge gymnastics Clubs for all ages and abilities; growing the sport by empowering former gymnasts to continue to coach, judge and administrate the Clubs she formed, and so much more.

I consider myself incredibly lucky to have had this tour de force as part of my life for over five years. I have simply never met a woman I admired more.” **-Lorna Hundt (nee Campbell)**

“I have admired and looked up to Marta Selmeczi; a woman who has been my coach, mentor and friend. I first met Marta when she moved to St. Catharines to coach at Club Heidelberg over 50 years ago. She instilled the love of gymnastics during my pre-teen years and was instrumental in my continuation in this sport in a variety of roles.

Marta did and still does demand from her athletes. She is a tough coach. And yes, I was afraid of her when I was young! The reason for this toughness is that she sees potential in her athletes and she wants us to reach it to its fullest. However, her soft side and big heart are always evident when the chocolate box comes out during our break! She makes me want to do my best. I do not want to disappoint or let her down.

I attribute much of my professional success to Marta. She taught me punctuality, accountability and a strong work ethic. You can count on Marta to be in the gym on time and ready to work from arrival to departure. One can easily pick out a “Marta” routine because of the

uniqueness, creativity and signature moves and choreography. I have borrowed many ideas for my own athletes over the years. Coaching for Marta in my early teens at the YMCA and later at Brock University, made me feel proud and special to be associated with her.

Marta gladly and freely shares her philosophy on life. She has an uncanny insight into people and her intuition is frighteningly right on the mark! “Listen to your auntie Marta” is a phrase many of her gymnasts have heard her say!

It is Marta’s tireless dedication, devotion and willingness to work with mature female athletes that makes her so dear to myself and current team mates. She has afforded us the amazing opportunity to participate in 3 World Gymnaestradas to date. We owe her so much!” - **Iirmi Jahn, member of Ladies masters group**

“Marta Selmeczi played a significant role in my childhood and teenage years. Her passion was contagious. She had an extraordinary ability to recognize the specific strengths of each gymnast, regardless of skill level, and knew exactly how to guide the gymnast to reach her full potential. Her exceptional creativity, high energy level, extensive knowledge of the sport, drive and determination combined with her colourful personality resulted in not only highly skilled gymnasts within a cohesive, supportive team of gymnasts and parents, but also an increased awareness of the sport within the community, province and country.

Her high level of commitment to gymnastics and her love for each one of us were always evident. The Lincoln Gymnastics Club was an extended family for me that I remember fondly. Marta was the driving force behind our affection for one another and for the sport.

I am fortunate to have been a part of something so special at an influential time of my life. Lessons learned from Marta have stayed with me and have helped shape the person I am today. Marta Selmeczi is, without a doubt, an extremely worthy recipient of the Lifetime Award from Gymnastics Canada.”

**-Pegi O’Halloran (née Campbell)**